

The Musical World.

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THE ITALIAN OPERAS.

Historically there is not much to be said about the proceedings at our two Opera-houses, in addition to what we published some time since. In the way of novelty so little has been brought out that a retrospect of the season of 1868 would differ in no material degree from a retrospect of the season of 1867. Mr. Gye may plead that, very shortly before it was necessary for him to open his theatre, he had no expectation whatever of again being called upon to direct a series of operatic performances; and that the failure of the scheme for uniting the two undertakings in one threw him, to employ a common metaphor, "on his beam ends." It is unquestionably true that the time at the disposal of Mr. Gye, and his active co-operator, Mr. A. Harris, to prepare for the season was brief without precedent, and credit may therefore be allowed them for the spirit and energy exhibited under unforeseen difficulties. On the other side, Mr. Mapleson may plead that he had literally to begin his career again. His old house burnt to the ground, he was driven to seek for a new one; and a new one found, it was indispensable to stock it afresh with such materials as had made the old house so rich. Viewed candidly, Mr. Mapleson's position, was by far the more trying of the two. Every member of his company might have left him for the rival theatre, had he not succeeded in obtaining an acceptable equivalent for the ancient building. He had to provide the music, scenery, costumes, decorations, &c. for more than twenty works, and he had to persuade the public that Drury Lane Theatre, the fitting up of which must have put him to no trifling expense, was just as good for the purposes of Italian opera as the late "Her Majesty's Theatre." However, both managers overcame the obstacles that confronted them; and if the admirers of the most refined and fashionable of entertainments have not had a very brilliant they have at all events had a very creditable season. There are malcontents, no doubt; and, while admitting that solid reasons for grumbling have existed, and more reasons in one instance than the other, we must add that if the directors of our Opera-houses were to present a new and attractive work every fortnight, and a new singer of genuine pretensions every week, there would be malcontents all the same. The complaints of the "stalls" and the "boxes," for the greater part, we esteem of little moment. Almost every permanent lessee of a stall, and almost every permanent lessee of a box, holds some singer or singers, dancer or dancers, according to his taste, in special regard, and would fain have his favourites continually advanced; but, as any one's favourite seldom happens to be every one's favourite, submission would in such cases be ruinous to the management. Few can have forgotten how persistently a certain tenor was put into the front rank during the summer of 1866; but it is equally fresh in the memory of those who frequent the Opera that the general public would not take to this same tenor; and, in the end, notwithstanding the highest influential patronage, the director of the house at which he was engaged found it expedient to dispense with his further services.

But to pass from generals to particulars. In our last notice of the Royal Italian Opera we brought our record up to that important period when the co-operation of Mdle. Adelina Patti, now the Marquise de Caux, had caused affairs to look bright, which, previously to her arrival, had looked ominously dull. The earlier events of the season—comprising the various fortunes attending *Norma*, *Don Carlos*, *Rigoletto*, *Un Ballo in Maschera*, *I Puritani*, *Faust* e *Margherita*, *Roberto il Diavolo*, and *Guillaume Tell*, together with the manner of their performance and the claims to consideration of certain new singers—were commented upon in detail; while Mdle. Patti's brilliant series of representations, in the *Barbiere*, *Martha*, *Lucia*, the *Sonnambula*, *Don Pasquale*, and *Don Giovanni*, those of her lively contemporary, Mdle. Pauline Lucca, who returned the same week as Mdle. Patti, and flashed before us successively as Zerlina (*Fra Diavolo*), and Margaret (*Faust*), were not less minutely dwelt upon. Since then, Mdle. Patti has appeared as Maria, in *La Figlia del Reggimento*, a part which she had not essayed since 1863, but one in which she excels all others who have attempted it on our stage—not forgetting that among its representatives we may count Jenny Lind in her prime, Alboni, Marie Cabel, and Mdle. Artôt, none of whom, however, possessed the true *vis comica* in the same degree as Mdle. Patti, and none of whom could execute the music with more delightful grace and fluency. Of the remaining chief performers in *La Figlia*—Signors Fancelli (Tonio), and Ciampi (Sulpizio), two of those nonentities who seem to be fixtures at the Royal Italian Opera—we would fain say nothing. Nevertheless, we cannot forbear giving circulation to an opinion expressed on all sides—that the persistence with which so indifferent a singer and so indifferent an actor as Signor Ciampi is allowed to figure before the subscribers in characters some of which used to belong to Lablache the elder, others to Ronconi (who, luckily for himself and for us, has owned no junior), is wholly inexplicable. At his best Signor Ciampi is no more than an obstreperous Paul Bedford. *The Figlia del Reggimento* pleases, however, on account of the unique performance of Mdle. Patti, of its lively music, and of a *mise-en-scène* which confers credit alike on Mr. Beverley, by whom the scenery

was painted six years ago, and on Mr. Harris, who has achieved nothing more effective in the matter of stage contrivance. With Mdle. Lucca in the theatre, a revival of the *Africaine* might have been anticipated; and perhaps, without even excepting the same composer's *Huguenots*, there is no opera in which the capricious little lady (who, by the bye, has again this season caused trouble to her manager) appears to more marked advantage. Her Selika is equal to her Valentine, the character in which she first came forward, her performance of which earned for her in a night a reputation which cannot fairly be said to have advanced a single step. But Mdle. Lucca is one of those who have little turn for study—witness her very slight proficiency, after an experience of seven seasons, in the Italian language. A certain pretty confidence, however, a certain indefinable charm, which she is thoroughly conscious of possessing, carries her through everything she undertakes; and never was this truth made more palpably evident than on one occasion, when Mdle. Lucca being indisposed, the interesting character of Selika devolved upon Mdle. Frizzi. More about the *Africaine*, or more about the *Huguenots*, at Covent Garden, need scarcely be added; enough that Signor Naudin, Meyerbeer's chosen Vasco di Gama, was *semper idem*, and that Signor Mario, the greatest Raoul de Nangis on record, was at one time himself, at another not himself—according as wind and weather may have ruled him. In the *Faust*, that lengthy and dreary French opera, relieved by one great scene and one beautiful act, Signor Mario was wholly himself; and finer acting, or finer vocal declamation, than his, in the famous passage where the outraged Ferdinand rejects the proffered mistress of the King, and spurns the honours that have been showered upon him, has rarely been witnessed. The part of Leonora, the "favourite," was never well suited to Mdle. Lucca, who has touching points in the last and best act notwithstanding, and might, with further care and study, make herself equally conspicuous in the rest. As usual, we had Signor Graziani in Alphonso IX., doing his utmost for the lachrymose air which the Royal hypocrite delivers while uniting the hand of his victorious champion to that of the mistress whom he has only been dissuaded from making his Queen under threat of excommunication. The rich and noble bass voice of Signor Bagagiola, too, sounds to eminent advantage in the music of the fulminating priest, Baldassare. About *Romeo e Giulietta*, M. Gounod's last opera, any more than about *Don Carlos*, Signor Verdi's last opera, and the only opera in which Signor Verdi has succeeded in being elaborately prolix, there is not another word to say; unless, indeed, it be a word of reiterated praise for the exquisitely graceful and poetical impersonation of Juliet by Mdle. Patti, whose genius never shone brighter than in this, her last new effort. *Romeo e Giulietta* completes the list of works selected during the season from operas belonging to the stock repertory at the disposal of the Covent Garden management—comprising twenty out of thirty-nine. Others were promised, but were not produced—as, for example, *L'Etoile du Nord*, with Mdle. Patti as Caterina, and *Le Nozze di Figaro*, with Mdle. Lucca as Cherubino. Then Mdle. Patti was to have played Elvira, in the *Puritani*; but, in lieu of Mdle. Patti, we had Madame Fioretti; so that the greatest favourite of Mr. Gye's public has not had a single new part assigned to her all the year. Finally, three novelties were announced—*L'Assedio di Corinto* of Rossini, with Mdle. Patti and Signor Mario in the cast; the *Gioianna d'Arco* of Signor Verdi, with Mdle. Patti, armed *cap-a-pie*, as Joan of Arc; and an Italian version of Auber's *Domino Noir*. Of these the *Domino Noir* alone was given, with recitatives and additions by the veteran composer—but not with Signor Mario as Horace, and not with either Mdle. Lucca or Mdle. Patti as Angèle, the Horace and Angèle being Signor Naudin and Madame Lemmens Sherrington. That, under the circumstances, *Il Domino Nero*, which was performed only twice, and at the far end of the subscription, should have been a *quasi-fiasco*, is not surprising. The last night of the season, a combined entertainment, in which Mdle. Patti appeared in an act from *Romeo*, an act from *Faust* (the Garden-act—all we have obtained from the pearl of Margarets this summer!), and the Lesson-scene from *La Figlia*, was a series of triumphs for that gifted lady, in whose name the performances were announced to take place. On the whole, Mr. Gye's general company has worked well together. What he wants is a new tenor—Signor Fancelli being no better than Signor Neri Baraldi; a new basso-buffo—Signor Ciampi being neither "basso" nor "buffo;" and a chorus reinforced in every department. If Madame Vanzini and Madame Lemmens would be satisfied to act as "*seconde donne*," Mr. Gye would be thoroughly supplied in that respect; while with regard to the "ruck," as it is been termed, he is fortunate enough, with Signors Tagliafico (a genuine artist), Petit, Capponi, Polonini, Marino, &c. at command. In Mr. Costa he has a *chef d'orchestre* whom an Emperor might envy him, and the orchestra is worthy its chief. Mdle. Dor, Mr. Gye's new dancer, is a rich acquisition; and her value has been felt, not only in the scene of the "Resuscitation of the Nuns" from *Robert*, which proved so serviceable as a spectacular "fill-up" on weak nights, but in other operas. The new singers have not been very successful. Mdle. Mayer, M. Coulon, and M. Lefranc vanished one by one; Signor Chelli, a very young tenor, who sang

twice in *Rigoletto*, is not a powerful acquisition; while Mdle. Grossi, the contralto who replaced Mdle. Mayer, though possessor of a fine voice, made no greater impression at the Royal Italian Opera than she had made, some time before, at Her Majesty's Theatre. Mdle. Lavroska, the promised contralto from St. Petersburg, did not appear; nor did Mdle. Morensi, the American contralto of the last two seasons, although she was equally in the prospectus. In compensation three new singers were heard of whom the "prospectus" had made no mention—M. Lefranc, who broke down as Arnold, in *Guillaume Tell* (the high pitch of our orchestra being too much for him); Signor Chelli, just referred to; and Madame Rey-Balla, a French soprano, with a Spanish reputation, for which neither her Valentine nor her Margaret sufficed to account. But where is Signor Tamberlik?—and where is Signor Ronconi? Without the first *Otello* is impossible; without the last *L'Elisir d'Amore* and *Crispino e la Comare* are impossible; while other well-known operas are comparatively distasteful—for, be it understood, Signor Graziani cannot play *Rigoletto*, nor can Signor Cotogni (otherwise by no means unacceptable) play *Figaro* as *Rigoletto* and *Figaro* should be played at Covent Garden.

We have already recorded the activity with which, in a strange house, for which everything had either to be provided or fitted up anew, Mr. Mapleson, and his indefatigable music-director, Signor Ardit, brought out, within the short space of two months, no less than fifteen works—*Lucresia*, *Semiramide*, the *Barbiere*, the *Traviata*, the *Trovatore*, *Linda*, *Don Giovanni*, *Figaro*, *Rigoletto*, *Fidelio*, *Norma*, the *Gazza Ladra*, the *Huguenots*, the *Nozze di Figaro*, and *Martha*. We have seen how these operas were generally represented by Mdles. Tietjens and Sinico, Mesdames Demerico-Lablache and Trebelli-Bettini, Signors Bettini, Gassier, and Poli, Herr Rokitsansky, Messrs. Santley, C. Lyall, and other members of his ancient "troop" from the theatre in the Haymarket; how the young American, Mdle. Clara Louise Kellogg, who created so favourable an impression in the winter of 1867, had confirmed that impression by successfully adding the part of Ninetta (*La Gazza Ladra*) to her repertory; and how Mdle. Christine Nilsson, the new "Swedish Nightingale," the brilliant apparition of the previous year, when, *dulce subridens*, in the guise of the luckless "Traviata," she at once took musical London by storm, had more than maintained her prestige by the assumption of the same part, together with that of *Martha*, and, better still, Mozart's *Elvira*—an *Elvira* to make one cry shame on Don Giovanni for neglecting her. We have recorded how, in the earlier part of the season, Signor Franchini, Mr. Lumley's "tenore di maledizione" in 1847, successively as Gennaro, Manrico, the Duke of Mantua, and Pollio, failed to renew the old enthusiasm, no opportunity being afforded him of vociferating the high B flat in the famous reproach with which Edgar of Ravenswood withers the heart of the prostrate Lucy; and lastly, how a new tenor, Signor Ferens, played Raoul (*Huguenots*) in a style that gave double zest to the expected arrival of Signor Mongini. The record of these proceedings brought us to the end of May—in other words, half-way through the season. Since then, although there has been nothing in the shape of absolute novelty, not even a sham *Domino Nero*, we have had a series of performances full of interest, at which, one by one, we may briefly glance in succession.

Passing over Signor Ardit's benefit concert—at which Mdle. Nilsson created extraordinary enthusiasm by her performance, in a morning dress, unaided by scenic accessories, and simply accompanied on the pianoforte by Mr. Benedict, of the scene of the madness and death of Ophelia, from the opera of *Hamlet*, which, thanks exclusively to the fair young Swede, has driven Paris wild—we come to *Lucia di Lammermoor*, the opera in which above all others Mdle. Nilsson has produced a lasting impression. That she would look the character of the heroine to the life no one doubted; and when she appeared before the lamps, in a costume distinguished alike by propriety and charm, it was felt unanimously that a more ideal semblance of Scott's pallid, love-struck maiden had never graced the stage. But Mdle. Nilsson's appearance was by no means all; her singing and her acting bore it out, and her entire performance was such as to impress itself indelibly on the memory. We need not enter upon a fresh description of the characteristics of Mdle. Nilsson's very engaging talent, nor of those natural gifts which have enabled her with persevering industry to rise in so short a time to the very head of her profession. Enough that a more legitimate success than hers on this occasion was never obtained by any lyric actress; and this was made convincing by the many times in the course of the season it was found expedient to repeat the opera. Mdle. Nilsson's associates were Signor Mongini (Edgar), who already, as Lionel (*Martha*), had given proof that his splendid voice was unimpaired and his energy as exuberant as of yore; Mr. Santley, than whom no one since Ronconi in his prime has sung the music of Enrico so admirably; and Signor Foli, a passable Bide-the-Bent (Raimondo)—one of those insufferable bores that are a dead-weight to so many otherwise pleasant Italian operas. To *Lucia* succeeded the sombre and magnificent *Medea* of Cherubini, that stern Florentine whom Robert Schumann felt

inclined to compare with Dante.* Of *Medea* we have on former occasions spoken at such length, as also of Mdle. Tietjens' noble impersonation of the heroine, that we need only add here that it is by such performances as this, *Fidelio*, *Donna Anna*, &c., far more than by experiments with modern Italian opera *pur sang*, that the great lyric tragedian is enabled to assert her undeniable supremacy among all contemporaries in the loftier walks of the operatic drama. At the same time we cannot dismiss *Medea* without honourable mention of Signor Mongini, who has studied and made himself thoroughly master of the difficult part of Jason; of Mdle. Sinico, and of Mr. Santley, whose *Neria* and *Creon* are perfect. The music of Cherubini, too, is evidently to the taste of Signor Ardit, who makes his fine orchestra and still finer chorus do their work so well that he might summon courage to re-consider curtailments which save little time, and merely help to damage the invariable symmetry of the Florentine musician's design. The *Huguenots*, with Tietjens, Mongini, Sinico, Gassier, Santley, &c., was for the most part what it almost always is with such a distribution of the chief parts; although in justice we must state that the general execution of Meyerbeer's great work was by no means effective. *Le Nozze di Figaro* came next, with two of the principal characters (as in the case of *Don Giovanni*) newly apportioned, Mdle. Kellogg replacing Mdle. Sinico as Susanna, and Mdle. Nilsson replacing Madame Trebelli as Cherubino—the last a change for the better, if only because Mozart's divine melodies were now heard in Mozart's original keys. As we have previously spoken of *Le Nozze*, it may suffice to add that, with this new, and powerful cast, it rivalled *Don Giovanni* as a permanent attraction, and that both operas were repeatedly presented to crowded audiences. Meanwhile Mdle. Kellogg had tried the arduous character of Amina, in the *Sonnambula*, with hardly the same result as had without exception attended her previous essays, speedily winning back her laurels, however, by her lively and intelligent impersonation of Maria, in *La Figlia del Reggimento*—a character in every respect suited to her means. The clever young American must look before she leaps. Her Amina was a leap in the dark; but in undertaking Maria she knew well what she was about, and obtained a success almost equal to that which followed her *Linda*—up to this period her most finished performance. Of *Faust*, and of Mdle. Nilsson's Margaret, enough has been said; and we only wish we could add that Signor Ferens, by his impersonation of Faust, had accomplished more to recommend him to favourable notice than was accomplished by his Raoul de Nangis. The last opera produced was *Il Flauto Magico*, which on the whole could not, as things go, have been more effectively presented. The revival of this work, which Beethoven persisted in regarding as the dramatic masterpiece of its composer—*Don Giovanni*, for the subject of which Beethoven entertained a strong repugnance, notwithstanding—is one of the things that confer most honour on Mr. Mapleson and those who act under him. With Mdle. Tietjens as Pamina, Mdle. Nilsson as the "Queen of Night," Mdle. Sinico as Papagena, Mr. Santley as Papagena, Signor Bettini as Tamino, Signor Foli as Sarastro, and last not least, Mr. C. Lyall as Monostatos, the vocal solo and concerted music is done to perfection; while the orchestra and chorus are all that can be wished. To say nothing of the abiding success of Mdle. Nilsson, a season in which three of the noblest of Mozart's operas have been so frequently heard, with Beethoven's *Fidelio* and Cherubini's *Medea* in the bargain, would alone be worth remembering. And such has been the first season of Her Majesty's Opera, in its new abode.

The last week was taken up with so-called "benefit" entertainments, to which the names of Mdles. Kellogg, Nilsson, and Tietjens were respectively attached. About these we need say no more than that they were "gala-nights" as a matter of course. On referring to Mr. Mapleson's prospectus we find that all the singers announced, with the exception of three, and those of little account, have appeared, as well as two young and promising tenors—Signor Bulterini, who has a fine voice, and made an acceptable *début* as the Duke in *Rigoletto*; and Signor Moriano Neri (from the Pergola, Florence), who favourably impressed the audience as Alfredo in the first act of the *Traviata*, on the night of Mdle. Nilsson's benefit—besides Signor Fiorini, a bass, who came out as Leporello. On the other hand, neither of the promised novelties—Auber's *Gustave III.*, and Wagner's *Lohengrin*—was forthcoming. Nor, to say truth, did any one at all versed in the arcana of the Opera believe that they could possibly be forthcoming. Mr. W. Beverley found quite enough to do in patching together whatever was ready to his hand in the existing properties of Drury Lane Theatre (and this he accomplished admirably well), without having an hour to devote to anything in the shape of absolutely new scenery. But, to have done with minor details, the season, it must be admitted, taking into account the trying circumstances under which it began, has been highly creditable to the management. Whether next year the operatic

* Der feine, gelehrte, interessante Italiäner, dem in seiner strengen Abgeschlossenheit und Charakterstärke ich manchmal Dante verglichen möchte. — *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. ii. page 266.

public will have to welcome Mr. Mapleson once more in the Haymarket, where Her Majesty's Theatre is already rising like a phoenix from its ashes, or once more at Drury Lane, remains to be seen. Enough that he has shown himself equal to a difficult emergency; and it is to be hoped that there may be no further talk of combining the two Italian Opera-houses in one, which could only tend to a monopoly inimical alike to art and the public interests. D. P.

Shaver Silver across the Royal Italian Opera.

SIR,—After a perusal of your amazing review of the past Italian Opera season, I was inspired with some thoughts, which, having thrown into writing, I wish you would throw into print.

The most remarkable thing about the operatic season of 1868 is that it has not given us one novelty. *The Siege of Corinth* was promised; we were threatened with *Lohengrin*; but the works really performed have been *Don Giovanni*, *Figaro*, the *Barber of Seville*, *Gazza Ladra*, *Luceria Borgia*, *Don Pasquale*, *Rigoletto*, the *Traviata*, and *Trovatore*. At the beginning of each season our managers, in drawing up their programmes, give themselves *carte blanche* as to what they shall bring out. They take little account of difficulties, and readily announce the performance of any work which inspires their imagination. "You should see the books I have not written!" said Coleridge. Our operatic managers may, in a similar spirit, boast of the works of which they have dreamt, but never produce. An operatic prospectus is crammed with good intentions; but as the season draws to an end the good intentions vanish, and projected operas are dismissed like projects of bills during the last few weeks of Parliament. The managers are often right. It is not their fault if season after season is allowed to pass without a new work being presented to the public. Where are the new works? There are only two composers now who write for all Europe—Signor Verdi and M. Gounod. The former has produced nothing worthy of his reputation since *Un Ballo in Maschera*. The latter has written nothing thoroughly successful since *Faust*; nothing that quite deserved to succeed since *Mireille*. All, then, that the director of the Royal Italian Opera can do is to rely upon the familiar works of which its repertory is full, and occasionally fish up some novelty or quasi-novelty from the depths of the operatic ocean by way of showing to subscribers that he is doing his best to provide for their entertainment. Otherwise, if he pursues a more enterprising course—if he makes a point of playing out every *Forza del Destino*, written specially for St. Petersburg, every *Hamlet* which may happen to be the rage of the moment at Paris—he incurs the risk of annihilating his establishment. The career of an opera-manager, in the dearth of operatic composers, is very arduous. And not only are there few composers, but the few there are produce very few successful works. If, then, such an opera as *Don Carlos* is brought out—a work written for what some regard as the first lyrical establishment in Europe by the first dramatic composer in Europe—a manager in the position of Mr. Gye must either reproduce it in London, at an immense expense and with the fore-knowledge that he will lose money, or lay himself open to the charge of being wanting in enterprise. We seem to have reached something like absolute stagnation in the operatic world. Thus, at the beginning of the season, Mr. Gye could think of nothing newer to offer the public than Rossini's *Siege of Corinth* and Auber's *Domino Noir*; while the only novelties which recommended themselves to Mr. Mapleson were Auber's *Gustave III.* and Wagner's *Lohengrin*—the last a work which may be looked upon as belonging less to the "music of the future" than to that of the past.

Under great difficulties, foremost among which must be placed the difficulty of finding new singers, and the more than difficulty—the impossibility—of discovering a new opera worth producing, Mr. Gye has gone through the season without one wholly uninteresting performance; while many of the works represented at the Royal Italian Opera have been given with a perfection unattainable elsewhere. The history of a past season seems to us about as interesting as a history of old—and not very old—playbills. But as such histories are periodically written, it must be presumed that they find readers, and that there are persons at the beginning of August who are desirous of being reminded with what opera Mr. Gye commenced his season at the end of March. *Norma*, then, was the work performed on the opening night, with Mdlle. Frieci as Norma, Madame Lemmens-Sherrington as Adalgisa, and Signor Naudin as Pollio. This caused no great excitement. But the opening of the Royal Italian Opera is a good thing in itself; and, singing apart, it is a treat, after having been kept without operatic music for seven or eight months, to hear Mr. Costa's orchestra again. After *Norma*, *Don Carlos*, one of the novelties of the past season, was reproduced, Mdlle. Lucca again being replaced by Madame Lemmens in the character of the Princess of Valois. The manager proposes, but the *prima donna* disposes; and the charming but capricious Pauline was not disposed to appear in a part for which she could do much, but which

could do nothing for her. In *Don Carlos* Signor Verdi has striven hard to surpass himself. It contains some of his most laboured writing, in which the laboriousness is not atoned for by ingenuity. Here and there he ceases to be the Verdi of the *Trovatore*—writing now well, now ill, always spontaneously, and always as an imitator of Meyerbeer. This is especially noticeable in the ingeniously devised but entirely unoriginal scene of the third act, where citizens, soldiers, and inquisitors are introduced in three separate groups, each group furnished with its own appropriate music. The contrasts and combinations in this scene are dramatic but not new; and, effective as they are, the chief impression they produce upon every one who remembers *Le Prophète* is that Verdi is copying Meyerbeer. *Don Carlos* was magnificently put upon the stage. All that Mr. Gye's liberality and Mr. Augustus Harris's knowledge of scenic effect could do was done; the orchestral accompaniments were executed to perfection; Mdlle. Frieci, too, was heard to unusual advantage as the Princess d'Eboli, and Signor Graziani sang the part of the Marquis Posa. Still *Don Carlos* was again unsuccessful. The Royal Italian Opera is not to blame. We can only blame Signor Verdi and the regulations of the French "Académie," by which all important works written for that time-honoured establishment must consist of five acts, and include at least one *divertissement*—must, in a word, be insufferably long.

Romeo e Giulietta, played as it could be played at no other theatre in the world—for was not Signor Mario the Romeo and Mdlle. Adolina Patti the Giulietta?—did not, when it was first brought out at the end of last season, please so much as from the beauty of the subject and the reputation of the composer might have been expected. Nor this season has it been more fortunate. Some of the duets—and the opera is almost a series of duets—are charming. The Balcony-scene and the scene of the separation of the lovers give Romeo and Juliet abundant opportunities of proving their genius both for vocal and for dramatic expression. The pretty *madrigal à deux voix*, based on the exquisite lines interchanged between the lovers at their first meeting, is worth being sung as Signor Mario and Mdlle. Patti sing it. There are other points, passages, and scenes in the opera which deserve to be specially cited; but I have already cited them often enough. *Don Carlos* and *Romeo e Giulietta* were the only novelties, or things resembling novelties, offered to the public this season. They are both newer than *Le Domino Noir*, which has already lived a much longer life than either Verdi's or Gounod's latest opera can hope to obtain. *Le Domino Noir* was new to us, it is true, on the Italian stage; and it had been promised so often with Mdlle. Adolina Patti and Signor Mario in the principal characters, that Mr. Gye doubtless felt bound to produce it at last, even though he had to entrust the part of Angèle to Madame Lemmens-Sherrington, and that of Horace to Signor Naudin.

If Mr. Gye for the best reasons could bring out no new operas, he has, at least, introduced several new singers. Mdlle. Mayer, at the beginning of the season, made her *début* as Maddalena in *Rigoletto*, and in that not altogether unimportant part achieved a certain success. Soon after Madame Locatelli made her first appearance as Henrietta in *I Puritani*. On this occasion Signor Mario re-appeared for the first time these I do not know how many years, as Arturo, looking and acting the part to perfection, and showing also how it might be sung to perfection. The first performance of *Un Ballo in Maschera* gave Mdlle. Vanzini an opportunity of displaying her voice and style in the music assigned to the page Oscar. Mario—incomparable in this as in some half-dozen other parts—impersonated the Duke, and Signor Graziani was still Renato, one of his favourite assumptions. *Robert le Diable* served to introduce a new bass, Signor Colini, who came before the public as Bertram, and a new *danseuse*, Mdlle. Dor, who undertook the part of Agatha. The *danseuse* got on better than the bass. Mdlle. Dor is agile, graceful, and has a *mime* full of expression. The mounting of the opera was all that could be desired; and nothing was wanting but first-rate representatives for the principal parts. The production of *Guillaume Tell* was one of the events of the season. The part of Arnold was entrusted to a new tenor, M. Lefranc, that of Tell to Signor Graziani, that of Matilde to Mdlle. Vanzini. M. Lefranc, principal tenor at the Bordeaux theatre, had been engaged for three performances. The first night the upper part of his voice seemed to have left him, and on the third it had not yet returned. The unsettled state of M. Lefranc's organ arose, according to some critics, from his unavailing attempts to accommodate himself to Mr. Costa's orchestra, the pitch of which is half a note higher than that of the French orchestras—all tuned, in conformity with the terms of a wise ministerial decree, to one and the same diapason. Without entering upon a formal consideration of this question, we may record the fact that M. Lefranc during his journey from Bordeaux to London seemed to have dropped, not half a note, but several notes. But when he *did* sing, he sang with effect; and probably all he wanted was rest, which, during so hurried a visit, he could not obtain.

At a later period, Madame Rey-Balla, a new soprano, came out as Valentine in *Les Huguenots*. Madame Rey-Balla, who had sung with

success at Lisbon and Madrid, was coldly received at the Royal Italian Opera. Her voice was neither powerful nor sufficiently sympathetic to produce a favourable impression, while her acting was too emphatic. Madame Rey-Balla had been advertised to appear, but did not appear, in *L'Africaine*. The hot weather, with its relaxing effect on the throats of singers, had set in; so that Madame Rey-Balla, Signor Mario, and Mdlle. Patti, at one house, Mdlle. Nilsson and Mdlle. Tietjens at the other, were for a time (fortunately not at the same time) unable to sing. Among the *débütantes* of the season, Mdlle. Grossi (formerly of Her Majesty's Theatre), a contralto with a full voice, must not be forgotten; neither must Signor Chelli, one of the youngest tenors on the stage, and one of the weakest. Nevertheless, Signor Chelli is not without promise.

The season may be said to have ended happily since it ended with a marriage; though that marriage will not be looked upon very favourably by the public if it deprives us of the charming talent of Mdlle. Patti. However that may be, it ought not to be forgotten that to Mr. Gye we are indebted for having made Mdlle. Patti's acquaintance. Mr. Gye was the first manager on this side of the Atlantic who offered Mdlle. Patti an engagement; and his theatre is the only one at which the most celebrated singer of the present day has sung for eight seasons in succession. Of Mr. Gye's many titles to the esteem and gratitude of the music-loving public this, as it seems to us just now, is one of the greatest.

Dr. A. S. Silent.

Shaver Sibber.

MUSIC IN BERLIN.

The season at the Royal Opera-house recommences on the 15th inst., the holidays having begun on the 13th June. During the intervening period, visitors staying in what may now be regarded as the first capital in Germany have had to content themselves with patronizing the Friedrich-Wilhelmstadt Theatre, or Kroll's. Now, the Berliners are very proud, and justly so, of their Royal Opera-house; they regard it as a national institution, and feel that foreigners or provincials, whose sojourn in Berlin is limited, ought always, if so inclined, to have the power of visiting. Public opinion has lately become very strong on this point, and the consequence is that in future the Opera-house will not be closed again, except of course for repairs. The singers will take their holidays in turns, instead of *en bloc*, as at present. This is the proper, and only reasonable, plan, and ought to have been adopted from the very first. I presume that the clerks at the Berlin Post Office have a holiday now and then, but I have never yet seen a notice to the effect that "after the —th of next month, there will be no delivery of letters up to the —th of —, as the Post Office will be closed for the holidays." The only persons here, as far as I know, who object to the change are the members of the chorus and band. But their objection is very frivolous. They fancy they would have to work on, singing and playing respectively, from one year's end to another, without a moment's respite. Has it never struck them; that, supposing the Opera-house is in future always kept open, their numbers can be sufficiently increased to allow them also to have a holiday in turn, like the more prominent members of the establishment? This would be a very simple expedient for getting over the difficulty, and will undoubtedly be adopted.

During the vacation, the theatre has been renovated externally. It has, moreover, been lengthened twenty feet at the back, so as to afford increased accommodation for the wardrobe-rooms, and other working departments behind the scenes; the statues are as clean as sedulous washing would render them; and the inscriptions are resplendent in all the glory of fresh gilding; so that, to adopt the phraseology of Hebrew second-hand clothiers—when *selling*, not *purchasing*—a coat or pair of trousers, the whole edifice, viewed from the street, looks "better as new."

And now let me say a few words about the last season. It is some time since I sent you a letter, the reason being that there was very little to chronicle, and I did not consider it worth while to forward merely a list of the old operas performed week after week with the same performers, whom I had noticed time out of mind. *Cui bono?* which means—but no! I am not going to translate the expression for you. I will not compromise myself, as, if I did translate it, I must inevitably do, either in the estimation of the *Saturday Review*, or of the classical quoters whom it attacks, so utterly at variance are the disputants as to the proper meaning of the phrase. Besides, you, too, may have some pet

theory as to its signification, and I might offend your grammatical susceptibilities. So I will return to that particular one of my muttons of which I was treating: the past season at the Berlin Opera-house. I repeat I did not consider it worth while to forward merely a list of the old operas performed, and so on, but all that was worth recording I carefully noted down, and will now proceed to condense my facts in one communication, just as Baron Liebig compresses the essence of I cannot say how many pounds of beef into one pot of his *Extractum Carnis*.

A talented member of the company has left us. I allude to Madame Blume-Santer, who assigned as the reason for her secession that she was not sufficiently employed. By the way, a tolerably long experience in operatic and dramatic matters has taught me that for artists connected with the stage—either singers or actors—there seems, in one respect at least, to be an utter absence of that mysterious something known, or rather unknown, as "the happy medium." If the manager keeps them continuously before the public for any length of time, they complain of being worked to death; if he takes them out of the bills for a few weeks, they tell every one with an injured air that they are never allowed a chance of showing what they can do. Verily a manager's post is not a bed of roses. Madame Blume-Santer chose for her last appearance the part of Donna Anna in *Don Juan*. She sang artistically, as usual, but the thought of leaving the Berlin public, with whom she has become a favourite, evidently overpowered her, and in one scene she broke down, so that the curtain had to be temporarily dropped. Madame Blume-Santer is now taking advantage of her voluntary retirement to study under Signor Lamberti, in Milan. She is already engaged, by the way, on most liberal terms, for the entire winter season, at Venice. I trust with all my heart that she may succeed, for she is a painstaking and conscientious artist.

Talking of last appearances reminds me of Mdlle. Artôt, who, after playing a round of characters with great success during the past season, left us to go and delight the inhabitants of Warsaw. This accomplished lady is very popular, not only with the public, but with her fellow artists, and at her last appearance, when she sustained the character of the Countess in *Figaro's Hochzeit*, she was presented with a silver laurel crown by that young rascal Cherubin, *alias* Mad. Lucca. I am sorry to say that we shall be deprived of the pleasure of hearing this last-named lady's voice again for some time. She is engaged at the Italian Opera, St. Petersburg, from the 4th November till the 16th December. Her Berlin admirers—in other words, the whole opera-going population, with few exceptions—grumble a bit, and declare that they have spoiled their favourite; have applauded her too much; have made such a fuss of her, that she is beginning to be satiated with their praise. They say that there was once a time when she cared more about their good opinion. Of course there was, and when the Gravedigger, who knocked the scull "about the mazzard" with such supreme indifference, was a boy, I warrant he did not feel as careless about passing through the churchyard late at night, as he did in after-life. There is a most comprehensive principle contained in Hamlet's assertion: "The hand of little employment hath the daintiest sense." Probably, at the present day, Mad. Lucca thinks that fame is not the sole object after which an artist may strive. From hearing so frequently the hero of Scribe's celebrated libretto assert that—

"L'or est une chimère,"

she may have begun by pondering over his assertion; she may next have doubted it; and then, repudiating it altogether, as every individual who is not a character in *Robert le Diable* must do—have arrived at the conclusion that gold, far from being a chimera, is a very agreeable and necessary reality; that a great deal of it is preferable to a little; and that, as artists cannot last for ever any more than other folk, they may as well make hay while the sun shines, or in other words, gain an unheard of number of Russian roubles while they have a chance. And who shall blame her? Not I, assuredly. If Mad. Lucca were to lose her voice to-morrow—*absit omen*—her Berlin admirers would not put their hands in their own pockets and continue to pay for her natural life the salary she now receives from the Opera-house. *Argal*, Mdlle. Lucca is quite right to go to St. Petersburg, if she chooses—only—only, don't let her go too often, if she would not injure her beautiful voice.

The assumption of a new part by a performer of established reputation is always an event, and, therefore, public curiosity was naturally excited by the announcement that Herr Niemann was about to appear as Eleazer in *La Juive*. The part is a favourite one with tenors in Germany, as it affords very many admirable opportunities for display, both vocally and histrionically. But—the event has proved that it is entirely beyond the grasp of Herr Niemann. A great many passages in the music lie too high for him, and his individuality does not at all correspond with that of the old Jew. His bearing has too much of the young and noble cavalier about it for the representative of a down-trodden and oppressed race. The costume was Eleazer's; but nothing more. I do not think it probable that Herr Niemann will venture on the character very often again. To speak the truth, *buona e bella*, his attempt was a failure.

We have had plenty of "*Gäste*," literally "guests," that is, as I have frequently explained already, artists engaged for a certain number, more or less extensive, of performances, with a view, generally, to a permanent engagement. On the principle of *place aux dames*, let me commence with Mdle. Sessi. This young lady came from Frankfort-on-the-Maine, and made her first appearance as Marie in *Die Regiments-Tochter*; her second, as Margarethe, in M. Gounod's *Faust*; and her third as the Queen of Night, in Mozart's *Zauberflöte*. She possesses a pleasing exterior, and a voice which is of extraordinary compass in the upper register, but wants strength and volume. It has been evidently well schooled, however, and will improve with time. One great characteristic of Mdle. Sessi's style is her marvellous execution of *staccato* passages. As an actress, she has everything to learn, and I myself still adhere to the opinion I have always entertained in such cases that the Royal Opera-house, Berlin, is not the proper place for learners. However, the management is of a different opinion, and Mdle. Sessi is permanently engaged.

Another lady engaged is Mdle. Brandt from the Graz Theatre. She is somewhat provincial in her style, but possesses a good voice, which, though still partially undeveloped, shows signs of careful training. She should, however, bear particularly in mind Talleyrand's celebrated saying: "*Pas de zèle; surtout pas de zèle.*" She is so intent upon not letting an opportunity escape, that she lays a stress upon everything alike, and is thus continually at high pressure. Her first appearance was as Azucena in *Il Trovatore*; her second as Fides in *Le Prophète*.—The third engagement is that of Madame Voggenhuber, of whom I have had occasion to speak in former letters. Not one of the above three ladies can be called first rate, but they will all, I believe, prove, in time, useful additions to the company.

The remarks I have made anent the Royal Opera-house, Berlin, not being the proper place for learners apply with a hundred times greater force to Mdle. Schrötter than they do Mdle. Sessi. Mdle. Schrötter appeared here for the first time on any stage. The character she selected was that of Alice in *Robert le Diable*. Confidence is a good thing. We all know Queen Elizabeth's line in answer to that of Sir Walter Raleigh. "*De l'audace, de l'audace, j'en ai toujours de l'audace!*" also, is advice not to be entirely despised. But there may be too much of a good thing. As one of Dickens' characters observes: "We must draw the line somewhere," and, in the present instance, I fearlessly assert that the management ought to have drawn it a considerable distance before reaching Mdle. Schrötter, who is nothing more than a fair amateur. When I employ the epithet "fair," I do so in allusion to her sex, and not to her amateurship. I have heard scores of young ladies in drawing-rooms sing far better than she does, and yet fail to arrest the conversation which Society seems to consider ought always to be assiduously carried on while the vocal treat is in progress. I presume Mdle. Schrötter possesses interest in influential quarters. That she possesses plenty of friends was proved beyond a doubt by the applause lavished upon her, and which could not well have been greater, had she been a Jenny Lind. O, Mdle. Schrötter, Mdle. Schrötter! If you want ever to do anything as a singer, recollect a certain Spanish proverb, which refers to deliverance from one's friends. Put no more faith in the plaudits that greeted you than you would place in a flash note; go to the best master you can afford; study hard for some years, and then, if you still want to shine as a lyric artist, learn your arduous profession thoroughly in

some small provincial theatre before you again attempt to face an audience at the Royal Opera-house, Berlin.

In Kreuzer's *Nachtlager von Granada*, Herr Schaffganz, from the German Opera, Rotterdam, appeared as the Prinz-Regent. The opera, which had not been given for a considerable time, was revived expressly for him. Herr Schaffganz is certainly not to be compared with Pischek in the character, but his impersonation produced a favourable effect, and he had no reason to complain of any lack of encouragement. His voice is a fresh baritone, disfigured by certain nasal sounds which, I need scarcely add, are far from agreeable. Herr Schaffganz pleased me more in his second character, the Conte di Luna, in *Il Trovatore*. He seemed more at home in Verdi's music than he was in that of poor Kreuzer, and his voice, also, struck me as being stronger than on his first appearance. The management, as well as the public, must have been satisfied with him, for he is engaged. Another gentleman, Herr Krolop, from the Stadttheater, Bremen, made his bow as Rocco in *Fidelio*, but as he disappeared as abruptly as he came, I conclude that, when weighed in the managerial balance, he was found wanting. If such was the case, I express my sorrow for Herr Krolop individually, but his loss will not cause me any very deep regret.

Next season we are promised no ends of novelties, but I have not much faith in these promises. We were promised *Monts et Merveilles* last season, and what did we get? One new opera: *Die Fabier*—of which I forwarded a long account—and one new ballet: *Don Parasol*. Among the new works promised now, I may mention Auber's *Premier Jour de Bonheur*, Richard Wagner's *Fliegender Holländer*, M. Thomas's *Hamlet*, M. Gounod's *Romeo und Julie*, M. Thomas's *Mignon*, and *Fritzhof*, by Herr Hopffer. Among the artists we were authorized to expect was Mdle. Nilsson, who we were informed had consented to sing the part of Ophelia in M. Thomas's opera of *Hamlet*, her terms for two months being the trifling sum of twelve hundred pounds. This promise, however, has been officially retracted. Negotiations were, I have reason to believe, pending, but the fair Swede's demands were considered too high and so the negotiations were broken off. To make up for the absence of Mdle. Nilsson we are to hear in September a wonderful tenor, as yet unknown to fame, whom Herr von Hülsen, the Intendant-General of the Theatres Royal of Prussia discovered some months since in Paris. This *rara avis*, whose name I see spelt sometimes Ketten, sometimes Kelten, and sometimes Kolter, has not been long on the stage, and sang last at Saragossa. This fact causes me to fancy there is some mistake about the locality where Herr von Hülsen found him. I should not be surprised if it was in a *Château d'Espagne* built by Herr von Hülsen himself.

And now to conclude with a little bit of statistics. From an official account published concerning the management of the Theatres Royal, Berlin, Hanover, Cassel, and Wiesbaden, during the year 1867, we learn that, at the Royal Opera, Berlin, there were 65 performances of classical operas, operas by Mozart being performed 23 times; by Weber, 13 times; by Beethoven, 11 times; by Gluck, 7 times; by Cherubini, 5 times; by Méhul, 4 times, and by Spontini, twice. In Hanover, the number of classical operas represented was 24; in Cassel, 26; and in Wiesbaden, 22.

I have more to tell you, but at present I have no more room. Therefore I conclude with the old greeting:

VALE.

BADEN.—The bright particular vocal stars at the fifth concert were Mad. Miolan-Carvalho and Mdle. Schröder. The former sang the Waltz from *Romeo et Julietta*, and the "*Serenade*," by M. Gounod; the latter gave airs from *Der Freischütz* and *Ernani*. At the particular desire of the audience—or some of the audience—Mdle. Schröder added Schubert's "*Ungeduld*." The "*letter duet*" from *La Nozze* pleased so highly that the two ladies had to repeat it.—At the sixth concert, Mad. Miolan-Carvalho sang the Page's air from *Le Nozze* and a romance by M. Gounod, besides joining M. Barré in the duet from *Die Zauberflöte*. M. Barré alone sang some airs by Boieldieu and Nicolo. The vocal portion of the concert was confided to Mdle. Pérez, a young pianist, and M. Batta, the violoncellist.—Mdle. Mallinger, who was so successful in R. Wagner's *Meistersinger* at Munich will sing here in September.

TURIN.—There is a report that the Teatro Nota is to be rebuilt on the model of the Politeama at Florence.—The Teatro Alfieri has been opened by the company, as the *impresario* was not forthcoming at the time appointed.

*Histoire de Palmerin d'Olive filz du Roy FLORENDO de
MACHONNE et de LA BELLE GRIANE, fille de Remiclos, Empereur de Constan-
tinople, by Jean Maugin, dit le Petit Angevin. A perfect copy of this
extremely rare Romance to be sold for THIRTY-FIVE GUINEAS.*

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DEATH.

At Etralle, near Havre, on the 3rd inst., Mr. RENE FAVARGER, in his 54th year.

At 53, Charing Cross, on the 10th inst., K. BOWLEY, Esq., son of R. BOWLEY, Esq., in his 30th year, deeply regretted.

NOTICE.

The MUSICAL WORLD will henceforth be published on FRIDAY, in time for the evening mails. Country subscribers will therefore receive their copies on Saturday morning. In consequence of this change, it is urgently requested that Advertisements may be sent not later than Thursday, otherwise they will be too late for insertion in the current number.

TO ADVERTISERS.—The Office of the MUSICAL WORLD is at Messrs. DUNCAN DAVISON & Co.'s, 244, Regent Street, corner of Little Argyl Street (First Floor). Advertisements received as late as Three o'clock P.M. on Thursdays, but not later. Payment on delivery.

The Musical World.

LONDON, SATURDAY, AUGUST 15, 1868.

ABOUT THE EISTEDDFOD.

IF the patient and intelligent reader did me the honour of reading my former article, he is prepared (Dr. Silent's characteristically reflection-casting foot-note to the contrary, notwithstanding) for entering upon the Where and How of the Eisteddfod.

First, as to the Where.

I allude to this because it is not very likely that more than one out of a hundred English readers ever heard of Ruthin. Why it should be known at all in connection with an Eisteddfod remains a mystery. Ruthin, to begin with, is in the Vale of Clywd, and through the Vale of Clywd there runs only the curious railway already described, both ends of which, being situated nowhere to speak of, have to be reached from anywhere by huge circumbendib. Then Ruthin is a very small town. In point of fact, and out of Wales, it would be called a village, spite of its mayor and corporation. Hence, Ruthin, is always much straitened to provide for a large influx of visitors. Putting these two things together—inaccessibility and very limited house-room—one can only speculate upon the reasons which made it the focus of a national gathering. Of course the Ruthinians were delighted with the honour, and showed their gratitude by sundry decorations, intended to give the little town a festive appearance. They hung out banners from the upper windows, they dressed the house fronts with evergreens, they threw verdant arches across the narrow streets, and many of them, having put on their best clothes, persistently exhibited themselves in the thoroughfares. This was all very right and proper, but it must not be supposed that the Ruthinians allowed patriotism to over-ride profit. So far from this, they managed to combine the two in a degree which permitted a very large admixture of the latter. For example, Ruthin contains but two hotels, and these adapted their charges to circumstances with as much facility as though patriotism were out of the question altogether. One being challenged by my bardic companion on our joint behalf, offered to take us in for ten shillings per night, and we promptly declined. It was not entirely from dismay at the price, but because we found that being taken in meant, in each case, sharing a double-bedded room with three other persons. The Welsh visitors

seem to have looked kindly upon this arrangement (I observe that they are equally fond of crowding in railway carriages), but the Bard had been long enough in England to find objections against it, and, I need not say that, his Saxon friends would much rather have slept under a tree. Happily, we were not driven to such an alternative, for, after exercising much patience on the curious railway, we found a resting-place seven miles off, in the ancient town of Denbigh, where our lucky star, just then in the ascendant, guided us to an hostelry called the "Bull." If anybody who reads this ever finds himself wanting a Denbighian inn let him seek out that which reposes under bovine protection. There he will be able to take his ease in genuine old-fashioned style, caring for nothing, because Mrs. Lloyd careth for all, like a beneficent inn-keeping providence. Thus much gratitude impels me to say, especially after so narrow an escape from Ruthin rapacity.

Enough of the Where, and now about the How.

Readers of the *Musical World* are familiar with the opening ceremony of an Eisteddfod. They have been told, time and again, of the Gorsedd, the sacred bardic circle, the sheathed sword, and the proclamation that "judgment will be pronounced upon all works of genius submitted for adjudication in the face of the sun, the eye of light." Hence I pass the quaint farce over as I do the procession which escorted the great Welsh divinity—Sir Watkin Williams Wynn, Bart., M.P.—to the pavilion, and come to the pavilion itself. This structure stood in a meadow close to the Castle, and proved to be, in all respects, better than that at Carmarthen of unfortunate memory. Its dimensions—156 feet by 110—sufficed to accommodate between 4000 and 5000 persons; it was light and airy, and its ornaments, if not judicious, were pleasant to look upon. In short, the building was a success, and when Talhaiarn (the Eisteddfod conductor) said as much in one of his numerous little interludes, the audience ratified his verdict by an assenting cheer. So far all was well, but the pavilion, on the first day, like the "marriage feast" of old, wanted guests. Not even the influence of Sir Watkin, added to the attraction of the programme, could prevent a "beggarly array of empty benches." A necessary result was, that the proceedings lacked enthusiasm, spite of Talhaiarn's vigorous efforts to impart it. However, what had to be done was done, and, among other things, two young ladies competed on the pianoforte for a silver medal (playing very like young ladies indeed) after which, also, among other things, the lucky aspirant for the famous Banting prize of £20, should have been named. It will be remembered that *apropos* of the poems sent in last year to compete for this prize, Mr. Edmund Yates wrote a letter which astonished and angered the bards to a degree that they have barely recovered their equanimity yet. Who was the judge on this occasion is a secret, but whoever he may have been, his award was not ready.

I may as well say here that the decision was given between the parts of the *Messiah* (!) on Friday; the fortunate asserter of Welsh poetic talent turning out to be an Oxonian and Newdegate prizeman. By a lucky chance I obtained a copy of the successful poem, and here it is:—

THE HARPER'S GRAVE.

It was a Sunday morning,
And the sound of praise was o'er;
As I was slowly turning
Away from the old church door,
I heard a strain of music
I ne'er had heard before.

Then some mysterious feeling
Allured and guided me,
'Till I found an old man kneeling
On a grave 'neath a dark yew tree,
Nervously waking the harp-strings
To mournful melody.

"Old man," I said, unshaken,
 "'Tis not the place or hour
 For minstrels to awaken
 These handmaids of their power,
 The songsters of the graveyard
 Are bells in yonder tower."

He did not cease his playing,
 But said, "When a soldier dies,
 We hear his war-horse neighing
 In his splendid obsequies,
 And his comrades waken the music
 Which he did dearly prize."

And then the voice was silent,
 And hushed the grieving string;
 But we heard for a single moment
 A gentle fluttering;
 Was it a chance vibration,
 Or the brush of an angel's wing?

Apart from the close imitation of Longfellow which these verses show, there is little in them to which the most fastidious critic can take exception, and Mr. Banting's £20 have undoubtedly added something worth possessing to our store of lyric poetry.

The remaining events in the first day's programme can be shortly dismissed. A choral competition between two bodies of singers made it at once clear that North Wales is very much behind the South in musical matters. The performance of each choir was almost as bad as it could be, and the same might be said of subsequent efforts. It will be a long time before the excellence so noticeable at Carmarthen can be attained farther north. A silver medal for the best pianoforte playing by males under twenty, brought but one competitor; £5 for the best singing of Mendelssohn's part-song, "The Lark," attracted but a couple of choirs; and two guineas for the best performance of Balfe's duet, "The Sailor sighs," resulted in the appearance of only two little girls who feebly essayed their task, and who ought to have had the prize, seeing that others with no better qualifications were thus favoured. But Mr. Hullah (the judge), valiantly denied it to the small aspirants, whereupon kind Sir Watkin gave them a guinea and sent them away rejoicing. One feels tempted to ask here, "Why such feeble competitions for musical prizes in the land of poetry and song?" Perhaps some of the bards will essay an answer.

The evening's concert was as badly attended as the morning's session, and the performance as visibly flagged. Its programme—a very miscellaneous one—contained Welsh music enough to satisfy the most ardent of patriots. It contained Welsh choruses for the Eisteddfod choir, Welsh songs for Mrs. Wynne Matheson, and Mr. Allen Jones, and Welsh fantasias for Pencerdd Gwalia (Mr. John Thomas), Eos Meirion (Mr. Ellis Roberts), and Mr. E. W. Thomas (violin) of Liverpool. But non-Welsh music was also fairly represented. For example Eos Cymru, Pencerddes (Miss Wynne) sang "Softly sighs" (capitally), Miss Watts gave "Non più mesta" (also capitally), Mr. W. H. Cummings was encored after a characteristic rendering of "The Bay of Biscay," Pencerdd Gwffyn (Mr. Lewis Thomas) sang "In Sheltered Vale" with his usual care and expression; and all four artists joined in Costa's "Ecco quel fiero Instante," with excellent effect. Nor was this all, for Miss Kate Roberts played Benedict's fantasia on "Where the Bee sucks" very beautifully, and Mr. W. J. Argent of Rhyl (accompanist), made a decided impression with a selection from *Faust* for harmonium. Yet the concert might easily have been better with a programme of better taste, and after-experience showed that a really good selection attracts its own audience who are prepared to hear it out with decorum.

The proceedings of Wednesday, like those of Monday were dull, owing to a scanty attendance. They had not even the life to be

derived from an attack upon the English critics, which reminds me that I had very nearly overlooked an oration delivered by Talhaiarn at the opening sitting. That the best of Welsh bards acquitted himself to admiration as regards manner, cannot be denied, but his matter was decidedly objectionable. I do not complain that he attacked the English critics—that was all fair enough; but he clearly had no right to assail one of them by name, and to indulge in a bad joke upon his personal appearance. Has Talhaiarn never heard of "No case, abuse the plaintiff's attorney." Anyhow he only weakened his own position by condescending to offensive personalities. The musical portion of the second morning's scheme comprised a triple harp competition; another in singing the "Village Blacksmith," another in singing Mendelssohn's "Stone him to death" (a most painful affair—prize withheld), another in part-song singing, and yet another in pianoforte playing by young ladies. A prize was also awarded for the best song and chorus adapted for Eisteddfod purposes, the judge being Mr. Brinley Richards, who, otherwise, had nothing whatever to do with the gathering—but further on this point anon.

The second concert was more ambitious in character than the first. It opened, for example, with a long cantata called *Llys Arthur*, the work of Mr. J. D. Jones, whose countrymen and women alone took part in the performance. I can say nothing for the one or the other, and it is hardly worth while to censure either. If anybody was gratified—good; if anybody was improved—better; and if anybody saw a necessity for much more improvement—best of all. The cantata was followed by a selection from *Acis and Galatea*, which, confided to the tried and proved ability of Misses Wynne and Watts, Messrs. Cummings and Pencerdd Gwffyn (Lewis Thomas) made a great success. Miss Edith Wynne and Mr. Cummings won a boisterous encore for "Happy we," Pencerdd Gwffyn did the same for "O ruddier than the cherry," and all three artists barely escaped with a single performance of "The flocks shall leave the mountains?" Should not such a result teach a lesson to the Eisteddfod conductors, who must now see that it is only when inferior music is put before the audience that cries are raised for "Llew" and "Cymraeg." The remainder of the programme was miscellaneous and calls for no remark.

So much deserves to be said about the third and fourth days that I shall now stop, and say it more at leisure.

THADDEUS EGG.

—O—

MUSIC IN IRELAND.

A series of concerts are now being given in various towns in the South of Ireland, under the conductorship of Doctor J. C. Marks, the talented organist of the Cork Protestant Cathedral. The performers are Miss Herbert, Miss Fennell, Mr. Henry Baker, and Mr. Gratian Kelly, all well-known and accomplished musicians. The concert at Youghal, which I had the pleasure of attending, was held on Wednesday evening, the 29th ult., and was patronized by a highly fashionable audience. It is almost needless to say that each of the performers acquitted themselves to the entire satisfaction of those who were present. The most admired pieces were, "The Blind Harper," by Miss Herbert; "Savourneen Dheelish," by Miss Fennell; "The Meeting of the Waters," by Mr. Baker; "The brave old Temeraire," by Mr. Gratian Kelly; and Mr. Costa's magnificent quartet, "Ecco quel fiero instante," which drew down thunders of applause, and was rapturously encored, to which the performers replied by singing it a second time. It was indeed faultlessly rendered, and if Mr. Costa himself were present, he could not but have appreciated the manner in which each performer executed his part. Too much praise cannot be given to Dr. Marks, the talented conductor, for the admirable manner in which he performs the accompaniments on the pianoforte. The entire arrangements for all the concerts were carried out by Mr. Nagle, concert agent, Cork, who being an accomplished musician himself, is eminently qualified for the task. There was a grand amateur concert in Killarney, on the 4th inst., on the occasion of laying the foundation stone of the new church which is to be built from the designs of William Atkins, Esq., architect, of Cork.

IL FANATICO PER LA MUSICA.

ST. GEORGE'S HALL.

Dr. Ambrosias, his Secret, an operetta in two acts as its author modestly describes it, was performed for the first time on Saturday evening at the above hall, converted for the occasion into an elegant little theatre. The appeal to assembled friends is ordinarily the least reliable method of arriving at the actual value of any work destined for public use; but, on this occasion, the *personnel* of the crowded audience contained a sufficient admixture of those professionally and officially competent to control the impulses of favour and affection to lead them in the right way, and to impart an emphasis to the judgment thus pronounced. To have invoked such a tribunal, and to have done more than fulfil their most indulgent anticipations, is the achievement of the composer and his *collaborateurs*. The subject of the operetta was once familiar to play-goers under the title of *Tom Noddy's Secret*, in which a respectable actor of his day, Mr. Strickland, attained a distinction which had not before so conspicuously attended his efforts. The piece, which was from the pen of T. Haynes Bayley, was very cleverly put together, and had a long run. Out of this material an umbrageous librettist, H. B., has constructed a lively book, and his fluent lines have met with excellent treatment from the composer, Mr. Doyle Carte. To those who do not know the thread of the story, it must suffice to say that a young Royalist officer has saved a little boy on the battle field of Munster, placed him in the care of a school-master (Dr. Ambrosias), left money for his maintenance and education, and afterwards, until the Restoration, continued his remittances, but never returned to England. After his departure, the boy is found to be quite another sort of "person"—as Mr. Mill might say. And it becomes necessary to treat him, not only to a suitable change of raiment, but an entirely different process of cultivation. The King having got his own again, Captain Ormond returns also, and announces by letter to Dr. Ambrosias his intention to come and fetch away "the boy," for whose use he sends on speculation a suit of apparel, a sword, and a horse. The Doctor's dismay is great—he has never been able to summon courage to tell his remote correspondent the "secret." The boy has grown up to be a girl, of course, very charming (as all who saw her on Saturday night must at once admit). In the Doctor's distress, Miss Lindor, as she is named, kindly consents to don the male habiliments—it being assumed that Captain Ormond will be deeply disappointed at the change which has robbed him of his male protégé. Now, on his road, the gallant self-constituted guardian has been thrown from his horse and picked up by Linda (as Linda). Sympathy and gratitude meet and kiss like fire and powder, and there is a simultaneous explosion of ardent love at first sight on both sides, the Captain being hit very hard indeed. We must hurry on, for the story is going beyond our limits. In her male attire, and under the name of Lindor, the Doctor's ward contrives to make a certain usher furiously jealous; is challenged; practises at the foils with Captain Ormond; receives a scratch on the wrist; faints; and at length comes out in her own person, anything but a disappointment to the gallant cavalier, and to the great relief of the Doctor.

Over the business of the second act we throw a veil. To narrate that were to mar all—it must be heard and seen; but we may here candidly express our regret that no very present opportunity presents itself. The foolish rage for the grand opera, so wasteful, so ruinous, has damped the courage of managers by its exhausting demands; and we are now without a stage on which the young but promising powers of the little *troupe* under our notice can find a chance of making their way with the public. Of Mr. Doyle Carte's score we can only consider the vocal portion, there having been no other accompaniment than that of the pianoforte; this, however, being admirably rendered by Mr. Laville and Lieut. W. A. Doorly, an amateur, showed indications of a brilliant and forcible partition. The story is conducted purely by means of accompanied recitatives and concerted pieces, certainly the most exacting form of construction that could be selected for a comic opera. But it has for the English ear every possible advantage over the plain recitative of the Italian, the natural cadence of which language can be but clumsily imitated in our own.

Thus it happens that, while there are fewer ballads or detachable airs than in many of our modern operas, there is no insufficiency of melody, wrought up in the *ensembles* which are skillfully handled; and all the melodies have clear and distinct character. The part of Linda (the heroine of sentiment), which was charmingly embodied by Miss Adelaide Newton, is throughout gracefully and tenderly sustained; while that of Mabel (the heroine of vivacity (to which Miss Jessie Royd imparted a bright and playful colouring), rings merrily upon the ear, and reached its climax in a brilliant *aria*, wherein the young lady exhibited a facility of execution and accuracy of intonation, reaching to D in *alt*, which took the audience by surprise. Mr. Carte has also provided his tenor with a very elegant ballad (as it must be called, until a more apt term can be discovered), which Mr. Wallace Wells rendered with a purity of taste and depth of feeling that must rapidly

"place" him among our first native vocalists. An amateur, Mr. Skelfington, made an efficient Doctor Ambrosias; albeit, his voice is not his highest qualification, his utterance of the words is most commendably distinct. A canon in the first act, which is not the worse for being evidently inspired by that in *Fidelio*, serves to show that Mr. Doyle Carte is ambitious of attaining a position as a scholastic writer as well as a sentimental lyricist. He is apt to task his soprano rather severely, but as he knew Miss Royd's capabilities and has certainly afforded them excellent opportunities, it is not for the audience to complain. The gentleman who undertook the part of Captain Ormond was so overpowered by nervousness that he gave but inadequate effect to his rôle, and failed to do justice to the very pure organ (baritone) which Nature has bestowed upon him. A few repetitions would, no doubt, remedy this defect, and these for all the young aspirants we heartily wish they may obtain. In the meanwhile we recommend to the composer a careful revision of his score, in which may be found a few of those *macule, quas incuria fudit*. *Dr. Ambrosias*, as a first attempt, reflects the highest credit upon all concerned in its production, and should form the *pièce de resistance* of a brilliant campaign for the clever *troupe* who have made so successful a *début* in it.

SOME NOTES ON BEETHOVEN'S DIABELLI VARIATIONS.

Thirty-three Variations for the Pianoforte. C major. Op. 120. On a Waltz of Diabelli's. Dedicated to Madame Brentano. Composed in 1823.

The title (which is not written by Beethoven) of the original MS., in the possession of Herr Spina, music-publisher, Vienna, runs as follows:—

"*Thirty-three Variations on a Waltz Motive by Ludw. van Beethoven. Manuscript 1825.*"

The above date, 1825, is incorrect. The title of the original edition is as below:—

"*Thirty-three Variations on a Waltz for the Pianoforte. Composed and respectfully dedicated to Madame Antonia von Brentano, formerly Mdle. von Birkenstock, by Ludwig van Beethoven. 120th work. Property of the Publisher. Vienna: A. Diabelli and Co., No. 1133, Graben. Leipzig: H. A. Probst. No. 1386.*"

Announcement of Cappi and Diabelli, in the *Wiener Zeitung* of the 16th June, 1823:—

"*Beethoven's Thirty-three Variations, &c.*"

"We are now not offering the world variations of the usual description, but a great and important masterpiece, worthy of being classed with the imperishable creations of the old classical composers, and such as only Beethoven, the greatest living representative of art, can produce. The most original forms and thoughts, the boldest turns and harmonies, are here exhausted, and all effects grounded upon legitimate (*solides*) playing turned to account, the work being the more interesting from the fact that it has been evolved from a motive which probably no other person would have considered capable of such treatment, for which this great master stands alone amongst his contemporaries. The magnificent fugues Nos. 24 and 32 will surprise every lover and judge of the serious style, just as the Nos. 6, 16, 17, 23, &c., will surprise brilliant players; in fact, all these variations by the novelty of the ideas, the care taken in the working of them out, and the beauty of the very artistic transitions, will obtain for this work a place by Seb. Bach's well-known masterpieces of a similar kind. We are proud of having been the cause of its being written, and have taken the greatest possible care that elegance should be combined in the engraving with the utmost correctness."

Schindler says (II. 35):—

"At the beginning of May (1823), the Master moved into the . . . Villa belonging to Baron von Prondy at Hetzendorf. The first composition on which he busied himself was the arrangement of the Diabelli Waltz."

On the 12th May, Beethoven was still in Vienna, and the Variations were nearly finished. He even wrote on the 25th April to Ries: "You will also receive in a few weeks thirty-three new Variations on a Motive dedicated to your wife." If Schindler means to say that this work was composed in Hetzendorf, he is mistaken. It is plain, from the above dates, that Beethoven could have been engaged, at Hetzendorf, between the 14th May and the 16th June, only in correcting the proofs, as the work must have been before that time in the publisher's hands.

HERR LEHMEYER has left London for Germany and Switzerland.

MISS KATE ROBERTS, of the London Academy of Music, was prevented playing at the Eisteddfod, in consequence of an accident, resulting in a slight concussion of the brain.

GENEVA.—Herr Gungl and his band are now giving a series of promenade concerts here.

WANTED—A BIG CONCERT HALL.

Seeing such great assemblies as listen to the masterpieces of sacred music with an enjoyment so evidently thorough, one cannot help hoping that the time may come when the music of Handel, Mendelssohn, and Mozart may be heard nightly in some place not carrying with it the bodily penance which has now to be endured by all lovers of such music. It is impossible to estimate how much, in this matter, London, and, through London, all England, has lost for the want of a central hall worthy of its purpose. Ask a musical friend how it is that you see him so seldom at Exeter Hall, and you are nearly sure to be told that it is the physical discomfort attending the enterprise which keeps him away. "I should go often enough," is the common reply, "but I cannot stand that abominable place;" or, "My wife is always ill when I go there;" or, "I subscribed last season, but had to give it up on account of the heat."

While such things are heard in every drawing-room in London, what are our manufacturers of "companies, limited," about, that one is not immediately started for building a decent concert-hall? There are difficulties in the way, no doubt, or the thing would have been done long ago; but it is a standing disgrace to London that nothing is done. We believe that the musical public is now large enough and public-spirited enough to find the required funds, if a proper scheme is put before them, without the hope of getting a dividend. Perhaps this, like most other good things, would fail to "pay" in coin; but if every lover of music were to give as many shillings as he or she can recall evenings of mixed misery and delight in the dreary building in the Strand, the ten or twenty thousand pounds required for the purpose would be soon got together, and would return an ample dividend in kind—that is, in real enjoyment of grand music, in the better doing of it, and in making it accessible to thousands who are now practically shut out from it. The economics of these things are now thoroughly understood; and it is quite certain that for defraying the cost of a thing so costly as really good music is, many shillings are far better than few pounds. With a hall fit for the purpose, there is no reason why oratorios done by well-paid choirs and orchestras should not find audiences nightly, if once the thing can be brought within reach of the great middle class. More surely still might this be the case if the scale of cost were lowered to fit the pockets of the so-called working class, or "shilling public." It is the grandest art, always, which is most certain to touch the souls of the unsophisticated multitude. The public still goes to see *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, however abominably acted, while "society," or such part of it as goes to theatres, finds delight in French *vaudevilles*. So the people will never be tired of listening to *Israel* and *Elijah*, though they may be voted slow by the enlightened patrons of *matinées musicales*. At present the price which must be paid to hear good music is virtually prohibitory to thousands, and yet this price is as low as it can possibly be made. Exeter Hall will contain an audience of two thousand and an orchestra of five hundred; there are thus but four listeners to one performer, and it follows that every listener must pay one-fourth of the average cost of a performer, to say nothing of other expenses. The Exeter Hall audiences pay, as a matter of fact, much less than this would come to, the majority of the singers and many of the players being amateurs, who sing and play for the love of music, and the pleasure of helping in a great enterprise. But this system would not answer if the demand for such music became more constant. Singing night after night would be work, not play, and would have to be properly paid for; and there is no doubt, with all deference to amateurs, that properly-selected paid choristers would sing far better than they do. These would not stop away from rehearsals; they would know their music; they would not stop in the choir long after their voices had worn out; they would not have to be humoured and petted; they would obey their conductor more and clap him less; they would, in short, be in every way more serviceable. If amateurs like to sing in public, they should either sing for nothing to audiences of poor people, who are out of the way of hearing better music, or sing for high prices to rich people for the benefit of public objects; and every now and then, no doubt, it would be pleasant to have some vast gathering, like a Crystal Palace Festival, by way of a moral rather than a musical demonstration, in which amateurs might let off their musical enthusiasm.

Another improvement would be the removal of the amateur element from the bands. With the exception of the performances at country festivals, and at the Opera-houses, we have not had till very lately a combination of a good band with a chorus. This luxury has been produced for the first time at the Crystal Palace. All who have heard the choral performances there at the Saturday Concerts must have felt how refreshing is the sound of a good orchestra to ears accustomed to the muggy tone and confused execution of the mixed bands which play for the two great societies. But this cannot be mended till we have a better and larger music hall, the simple fact being that there is no building capable of holding the numbers requisite to meet the cost of an effective band. Every reason alleged against our big choirs is a reason for a big hall. For the music of the character referred to there need be no limit of space short of that prescribed by the limited power of solo voices. This would allow of a hall containing six, eight, or, perhaps, ten thousand listeners.

En attendant the realization of any such dream of a musical future, we must be thankful to the spirited and zealous associations whose success, in spite of so many difficulties, has given ground for hoping that even greater things may be done some day.

—O—
SAMUEL LOVER.*

If an author be entitled to take his station according to the quality of his genius, and without immediate reference to the comparative value of his works, the name of Lover is unquestionably entitled to a prominent place among the minstrels and humorous writers of his country; for nearly all his efforts have been signally successful.

In literature, success is sure to create jealousy among the lesser aspirants for fame; nor should it be deemed wonderful that our facetious friend and countryman has paid the penalty which attaches itself to every popular writer, and created the envy of his contemporaries.

In a literary coterie lately, a disappointed author, speaking of Lover with some bitterness, actually accused him of having taken all the matter of fact in the novel of *Rory O'More*, from an unpublished work by another hand. "You only claim the matter of fact," said a wit present. "Certainly," returned the censor. "Then you cannot justly deny him credit for the matter of fiction," observed the wit, securing a hearty laugh against our crabbed critic.

It is true that the principal efforts of Lover's genius have taken the form of tales and songs, that are so simple, natural, and truthful, that they at once seize on our sympathies, and carry the best feelings of our nature captive by their force. The ear is as much taken prisoner by the sweet old airs he has newly dressed and restored, as by the apparent artlessness of diction in which he conveys sentiments beautiful, because they are natural, and sublime, because they appeal to the heart. How forcibly do the impressions of the painter-poet break forth in the sweet song entitled "The Angel's Whisper," embodying, as it were, a superstition, pure, holy, and ennobling, and elevating the mind to a dependence and connection not on, or with men of cold hearts and vain hopes, but with beings warm and pure, who lift us above every phase of difficulty, and privation. Throughout the whole circle of Irish melody there is scarcely a more exquisite air, and it would seem that with the great fame of Moore and others occupying the ground on which he also desired distinction, it would be necessary to do something new—something with the freshness of novelty about it to attract attention, and the thought of embodying the superstitions of his country in song occurred to him. But it was certainly venturing on dangerous ground when he attempted to adapt the popular air of "We may roam through this world," which had already been so beautifully rendered available by the first of Ireland's bards, the illustrious and inimitable Moore; whose songs have done more to cultivate the Irish heart, and elevate the character of his country than the writings of any other author on record.

And here, in justice to the subject of our sketch, we must observe that he has in many of his native portraits proved himself with equal truth and feeling not only successful as a *Lover*, but as a most faithful delineator of the charms of his matchless countrywomen, amongst whom the fair author just quoted may well be considered one of their brightest living ornaments. But it is in his accurate delineation of the simplicity of Irish peasant life that Lover excels. There he is at home, and there we feel at home with him, secure of being amused, by some sudden outburst of lurking humour, which makes us laugh, and we are pleased, we know not wherefore, and care not why.

* From *Personal Sketches of Literary and Musical Celebrities*. By Professor White.

TO GEORGE GROVE, Esq.

SIR,—The great influence which the publication of Bishop Percy's *Ancient English Poetry* has exercised from the time of its appearance is well known, and may be traced in the writings of some of the most distinguished authors of the present century. That this influence was due to the old and genuine elements in the *Réliquies*, none, I imagine, have ever doubted, yet not one reader in ten thousand has ever known, although some have suspected, when they were reading *Ancient Poetry*, and when the editors sham antique. Mr. F. T. Furnivall, of Furnivall's Inn, has undertaken to publish the *Ancient Folio Manuscript*, containing near 200 poems, songs and metrical romances, which was the publication of Bishop Percy's. Mr. Furnivall writes:—

By the Bishop's own showing, he altered his manuscripts at discretion. His introduction to "Sir Cawline" marks the spirit with which he regarded his authorities; "the whole [poem in his manuscript] appeared so far short of the perfection it seemed to deserve that the editor was tempted to add several stanzas in the first part, and still more in the second, to connect and complete the story in the manner which appeared to him most interesting and effective." Accordingly, as the manuscript ballad married Sir Cawline to his love—

"then he did marry this King's daughter
with gold and silver bright
& 15 sonnes this Ladye beere
to Sir Cawline the knight"—

and the Bishop thought this ending a most unaffecting one, he wrote some fresh verses, killed both knight and lady in what he considered a pathetic style, and of course abolished the fifteen sons. With a true instinct Professor Child remarked in his *Ballads* (ed. 1861, vol. iii, p. 172): "It is difficult to believe that this charming romance had so tragic and so sentimental a conclusion." By way of justification, the Bishop tells his readers that "His object was to please both the judicious antiquary and the readers of taste; and he hath endeavoured to gratify both without offending either." Now "in a polished age like the present," as Percy described in his own time, a judicious antiquary (unlike Ritson) might possibly be pleased with such treatment of manuscripts as the Bishop's was; but in an age which (like our Victorian) has, thank heaven, lost that kind of polish, a judicious antiquary would get judiciously furious at such tampering with a text, and demand imperatively the very words of the manuscript. After their production he might listen to any re-touchings and additions of editors clever or foolish, but not before. He cares first for the earliest known authority (however late it may be), and its sentiment, not for the "interesting and effecting" alterations made in "a polished age." This feeling led Professor Child, of Harvard University, years ago to apply to me to find out where Bishop Percy's folio manuscript was, and print it. My request to the Bishop's descendants to see the manuscript was (like that of nearly every other applicant) refused, as was also my offer of 100*l.* for the right to copy and print it. But lately a fresh negotiation, through Mr. Thurstan Holland, a friend of Professor Child's, has resulted in my obtaining (for 150*l.*) possession, for six months, of the long hidden manuscript, with the right to make one copy of it and print it. The MS. contains 196 pieces (some, fragments) in nearly 40,000 lines, and is in a hand of James I.'s reign. Percy's list of its contents at the end of this circular shows how many unprinted ballads and romances it contains—for what the Bishop printed of the manuscript must be considered unprinted for our purpose—and how incumbent it is on all men who care for such things to get the whole manuscript into type as speedily as possible. As above said, the sum paid for the right to print the manuscript was 150*l.* The copying and printing of it will cost at least 350*l.* more, and for extras and incidental expenses another hundred pounds should be provided; altogether 600*l.*

Well, Sir, what say you to the idea? And what says William Chappell?—Your obedient servant,
Castle Grove, Aug. 4

CAPER O'CORRY (Bart.).

LEEDS.—TOWN HALL CONCERTS.—On Saturday evening, a very enjoyable concert was given, when Miss Anna Hiles, Miss Petit, the Town Hall Choir, and Dr. Spark were the performers. Miss Hiles, who is now well known at these popular concerts, sang with her usual brilliancy. Most admirably she executed Handel's tuneful song from *Joshua*, "Hark, 'tis the thrush,"—enhanced greatly by the organ *obbligato* accompaniment, in imitation of the thrush and the linnet. Miss Petit has a contralto voice of excellent range and tone. She is a good musician, as was evidenced in Mendelssohn's duet, "Greeting," and in the other pieces set down for her. Miss Petit is, we understand, organist at Bolton Abbey. The choir sang Mendelssohn's part-song, "The Nightingale has been away," with taste and delicacy, and any body of singers that can do this is capable of almost anything. Dr. Spark's organ solos were highly appreciated. On Tuesday evening, Miss Helena Walker, Mr. De Jong, and the organ will be heard at the second assize concert.

BRUSSELS.—The Théâtre de la Monnaie will re-open, under the management of M. Letellier, on the 1st September. The company is said to be a very good one.—A monster concert, in which all the bands of the Belgium army took part, was given lately, under the direction of M. Bender, on the grand exercising ground.

WAIFS.

"The failure—the utter failure"—says the *Athenæum*, inspired doubtless by our leading article of Aug. 1st—"from an artistic point of view—of the hotch-potch entertainment given last week for the 'benefit' of Mr. Harrison brings home to the mind the demoralizing effects of all such pseudo-charitable exhibitions. Charity, thus misplaced, is directly opposed to mercy; it bleaseth neither 'him that gives' nor 'him that takes.' The public who paid for an unsatisfactory entertainment could not be gratified, and the actors and singers who gave their services could not be satisfied either with the arrangements made for them or with the pitiful product of their ill-spent energy. Nor could the history of the evening, if it reached Mr. Harrison's ears, have brought much consolation to his sick bed. The plain fact is, that those 'benefits' are elaborate expedients for extorting money out of the pockets of the 'poor and needy' for the self-glorification of the rich and influential. Great pressure is put upon the singer to induce him to assist a brother artist; and the gentlemen who make this appeal ignore or overlook the fact that they are begging for an alms which they themselves hesitate to give; they forget that a singer's time has an actual money value. To ask Signor Mario, for instance, to sing, is, in fact, to ask him for the price he charges for singing. It may be said, that it is easy enough to sing a song. And it is also easy for a dentist to extract a tooth, for a painter to draw a sketch, for a watchmaker to make a watch, and for a millionaire to spend a day's income. But the committee who expect an actor to sacrifice an evening's salary would shrink from asking a rich man to make them a present of an evening's revenue. We cannot look upon the members of the committee as real benefactors, however good their intentions may be, for their guineas are, in fact, the payment for the publicity given to their names. From the point of view of art, benefit entertainments are almost always unworthy: that given for Mr. Harrison was a signal example. The miscellaneous concert was, in some respects, beneath contempt: utterly incompetent singers were allowed to come forward, and the orchestral accompaniments would have disgraced the commonest music-halls. If the members of the committee and other friends and well-wishers had made up a purse, it would have been far better for art and for all concerned."

The Eisteddfod has been held this year at Ruthin,* and the solemnities which Welshmen hold, or pretend to hold, sacred, but which we English look upon as childish, began on Tuesday last. All that Sir W. W. Wynn could say in favour of the Eisteddfod over which he was presiding was, that "he looked upon it as a harmless way of amusing the people;" while the notorious "Talhaiarn," in eulogizing these national celebrations, asked, "which was the more likely to inspire mankind?—the poetry and sentiment of a Welsh Eisteddfod, or an English race-course, with its attendant evils of betting, gambling, and cheating?" Welsh bards seem to have a logic of their own. For ourselves, we cannot understand how the immoralities of an English racecourse can justify the absurdities of a Welsh Eisteddfod. In the musical competition, Mr. John Hullah acted as judge.

It is said that Herr von Lenz, the spasmodic panegyrist of Beethoven, is now taking the life and works of Weber in hand.

Herr Dessauer is announcing his musical recollections as in preparation. A work of no common humour may be expected.

M. Crosti, the agreeable baritone from the Opéra Comique, has been engaged by Mr. Mapleson to sing the part of Saint Bris, in the performances of *Les Huguenots* in the country tour.

Herr Wagner is about to publish a new book, with the title of *German Art and German Politics*.

The *Gazette Musicale* states that a collection of foreign musical manuscripts made by the publisher, Signor Cottrau, and supposed to be unique, has been secured by the Directors of our British Museum.

An American professor and organizer of musical festivals at New York, Mr. C. Jerome Hopkins, writes in a dejected spirit concerning the present state of music in America, of which others have sent such flourishing accounts. There is a tone of reality in his experience, which clearly suggests that, eager as is the desire to hear certain artists, especially those who come with a European reputation, that careful, patient study and preparation, without which there is no real result, is too universally disregarded in America. There is no musical growth without a substratum of study and patience such as our cousins beyond the Atlantic do not seem willing or able to consider as requisite. A city of lath and plaster may be improvised; but to the understanding, yet more the production, of art, faith, patience, and practical toil must contribute—such contribution being not an affair of a year more or less, but of a quarter of a century.

* See correspondence of Mr. Thaddeus Egg in our leading columns.

There is, we are informed, to be a Sivori Music Hall at Genoa.

Another of those Welsh farces called "Eisteddfods" has just been played out at Ruthin. Naturally enough—the recent insolence of his countrymen considered—that staunch Cambrian, Mr. Brinley Richards, formerly one of the chief ornaments of those queer and semi-barbarous meetings, declined attending this year, so that the public had to enjoy the speeches and songs of Bards, Ovates, "Roaring Lions," &c., without the complacency of those amazing exhibitors being disturbed by the presence of real excellence. These tragi-comedies must perish of their intrinsic puerility and the habitual bad temper of those concerned in them.—*Athenæum*. [Nevertheless, Mr. Brinley Richards has accepted the management, with all its responsibilities, of the Eisteddfod to be held next year at Brecon.—A. S. S.]

How long ago is it since our ancestors wore roses in their ears, and when did the fashion cease? Were the flowers real or artificial? And why should a person with a thin face not be able to stick a rose in his ear without men shouting after him, "Look, where three-farthings goes!" as appears by this passage in Shakspeare?—

QUEEN ELINOR. Whether hadst thou rather—be a Faulconbridge,
And like thy brother, to enjoy the land,
Or the reputed son of Cœur de Lion;
Lord of thy presence, and no land beside?

BASTARD. Madam, an if my brother had my shape,
And I had his, Sir Robert his, like him;
And if my legs were two such riding-rods,
My arms such eel-skins stuff'd! my face so thin,
That in mine ear I durst not stick a rose,
Lest men should say, "Look, where three-farthings goes!"
And, to his shape, were heir to all this land—
'Would I might never stir from off this place,
I'd give it every foot to have this face;
I would not be Sir Nob in any case.

King John, act. i., sc. 1, lines 134—147.

Perhaps some reader can elucidate this "very obscure passage," as Theobald calls it?

In the collection of *Proverbs and Old Sayed-Sawes*, at the end of James Howell's *Lexicon Tetraglotton*, 1660, we read—"Coll under canstick, he can play with both hands." The word *canstick* is not to be found in Todd or Richardson, though it occurs in Shakspeare. Hotspur cries—

I had rather be a kitten, and cry—mew,
Than one of these same metre ballad-mongers.
I had rather hear a brazen canstick turn'd,
Or a dry wheel grate on the axle-tree;
And that would set my teeth nothing on edge,
Nothing so much as mincing poetry.

First Part, Henry IV., act iii.

Here, Mr. Dyce tells us (*Glossary*, p. 64), *canstick* means *canstetick*; but if this is correct (he gives no authority), it throws no light on the strange phrase above.

Miss Lavinia Williams has received the appointment of organist at St. Michael's Church, Worcester.

The English Opera now performing at the St. James's Hall, Liverpool, has proved a great success. The *Daily Post*, in reviewing the opera of *Don Giovanni*, speaks of the success of Miss Fanny Heywood in the part of Zerlina, and observes:—

"This young lady is making rapid way to a distinguished position in her art, her performance last night has strengthened materially the favour which she has acquired among the patrons of English Opera in Liverpool. The simple melodies of the part were well suited for her clear, fresh voice, and she received two encores, one in 'Batti, batti,' the other in 'Vedrai carino.'"

Mr. William Rees, a young gentleman in Carmarthen, reputed for his musical talents, gained the silver medal for pianoforte performance at the National Eisteddfod competition at Ruthin, on Tuesday last. Mr. John Hullah, who acted as judge, complimented him highly for his musical abilities. Mr. Rees gained a similar medal at the Carmarthen Eisteddfod last year.

APTOMMAS' HARP RECITAL.—This talented harpist, reputed as one of the finest in the world, visited Carmarthen this week, and gave one of his famed harp recitals in the Assembly Room, on Wednesday evening. The evening was wet, and thus, unfortunately, prevented the attendance of many who had purposed to honour one of Wales' gifted sons. The performance was superb, and it is to us a matter of extreme regret, therefore, that an extraordinary pressure of matter compels us to forego the pleasure of entering into a detailed report. We are enabled to state that the renowned Aptommas will again visit Carmarthen during the coming winter.—*Carmarthen Journal*, August 7th.

DARMSTADT.—According to report the management of the Grand-Ducal Theatre have purchased the right of producing Herr R. Wagner's new opera, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.

DRESDEN.—Herr von Holstein's three-act opera, *Der Haidenschacht*, is to be produced before the end of the present month. Everyone engaged in it speaks very highly of its merit.

FLORENCE.—Signor Bazzini, who has done so much to introduce and popularize German music in Italy, and Signor Petrella, the composer, have been created members of the Order of the Crown of Italy, by King Victor Emmanuel.

MUNICH.—Herr Max Zengner's four-act opera, *Ruy Blas*, words by Herr Heigel, was produced for the first time on the 23rd ult., and very favourably received, the composer being called for after the third and fourth acts.—The management of the Imperial Opera-house, Vienna, has been trying very hard to secure Mdlle. Mallinger, but she has consented to remain here provided she is engaged for ten years, at an annual salary of 10,000 florins, with five months' leave of absence, and a retiring pension. These are rather high terms for a town like this, but it is believed that, sooner than let the lady go, the management of the Royal Opera-house will accede to them.

WIESBADEN.—Herr Theodore Wachtel has appeared in *Wilhelm Tell*, *Die Jüdin*, and *Die Hugonotten*.

BUSSETO.—A new theatre has been erected in this town, the birth-place of Signor Verdi, whose name it will bear. It was erected after the designs of Signor Montecchini of Parma, and is calculated to contain about eight hundred spectators.

NAPLES.—Among the works mentioned as to be produced shortly at the San Carlo, are *Jane and Caterina Howard*, by Signor Petrella, and Donizetti's posthumous opera, *Gabriella di Vergy*.

ST. PETERSBURG.—According to report, Mdlle. Adelina Patti is engaged not only for January and February, 1869, but for the entire season of 1869-70, and that of 1870-71.

FLORENCE.—*La Pietra del Paragone* will be given this autumn at the Teatro Pagliano, while Pergolesi's *Servà Padrona*, and Paisiello's *Barbiere di Siviglia* will be given at the Teatro Nuovo. The *Trovaroli* hints that the Italian Government is at the bottom of this rescuscitation of the old masters, and that its object is to send the Deputies off to sleep, and, during their slumbers, pass a few laws like the new law on tobacco.

BRIANZA.—Signor Graziani is reposing at his villa here, after his labours during the past season at the Royal Italian Opera, Covent Garden.

MILAN.—Since the decree abolishing the Government grants to those Italian theatres which formerly enjoyed them, it has been found a hard matter to keep the Scala open. The Corporation could not give more than five thousand four hundred pounds, so it made an appeal to the public to add something to this sum, but the public do not appear very enthusiastic, for, though subscription lists have now been opened several months, the many-headed monster has subscribed only one hundred pounds. Despite of this, there is no want of aspirants for the vacant managerial throne. First and foremost is the last manager, Signor Bonola.

CAUTERETS.—Signor Verdi is staying here in the hope that a course of the waters may relieve him from the affection of the throat under which he is suffering.

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